

THE SETBACKS OF UNFAITHFULNESS IN A. S. OGUNDIMU'S BEHIND THE MASK

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Received: 08 Oct 2020

Accepted: 09 Oct 2020

Published: 20 Oct 2020

ABSTRACT

This article aims at examining the setbacks of unfaithfulness Ina. S. Ogundimu's work, Behind the Mask. Unfaithfulness has become a phenomenon which undermines the society and it prevails in many couples nowadays. This situation is due to the fact that in most couples, husbands are not faithful to their faithful wives. So, this phenomenon deserves close attention. Hence the necessity to examine the phenomenon as it occurs in the novel under study in order to find out its potential causes and consequences. The methodological approaches used in this paper are the phenomenological and descriptive approaches. The focus of this research work is limited to a critical appraisal of the novel under study with illustrations. The study has found that unfaithfulness is a very bad practice in any couple because both husband and wife always promise faithfulness to each other during their wedding. The findings of the study clearly show that unfaithfulness exposes families to dislocation. The literary theories applied to this study are feminism, a literary theory which aims at revaluing women's image, and the Marxist approach which focuses on class struggle. Feminism here intends to revalue the image of the protagonist of the novel, Peju, by restoring the peace that she has lost in her home due to her husband's unfaithfulness. On the other hand, the class struggle here lies in the fact that men are opposed to women through the characters of Kukoyi and Peju as a couple. The paper recommends and concludes that unfaithfulness is a phenomenon which is very harmful to society and that it should to be eradicated.

KEYWORDS: *Setbacks, Unfaithfulness, Couples, Husbands, Divorce*

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of unfaithfulness is widespread nowadays insofar as people, mainly men, no longer get married to remain faithful to their partners. The concept of unfaithfulness is synonymous with infidelity According to B. Zare(2011, p. 182), "Infidelity is defined as unfaithfulness by virtue of being unreliable and the cheating on a relationship partner that takes place despite a commitment to exclusiveness. Sexual infidelity by a marriage partner is commonly called philander, adultery or an affair." "Infidelity literature shows the different reasons for being unfaithful such as education level, personality opportunity, attachment style, income level and employment, race, culture, religion and marital satisfaction" (B. Zare, 2011, p. 184). Unfaithfulness brings conflicts within a couple where it occurs Either the husband or the wife, or even both of them, may fall victim to it. It means that both members of the couple or only one of them may indulge in it. It is one of the phenomena which influence most African families and which require solutions. In most cases, men find it difficult to abide by the promise they make to their wives the day of their marriage. As a matter of fact, they promise to remain faithful to their spouses till death separates them. However, they break that vow shortly after the wedding, thus forgetting that unfaithfulness has a lot of setbacks. This research work aims at examining those setbacks as they appear in

the novel under study. Thus, it will shed light on the phenomenon by unveiling its ins and outs. It leads to the degradation of family and social structures. The research work is articulated around three sections: (1) Manifestations of Unfaithfulness, (2) Consequences of Unfaithfulness and (3) Lack of Cooperation in the Attempt to Solve the Problem.

Manifestations of Unfaithfulness

Unfaithfulness as depicted in *Behind the Mask* is noticeable at first through Kukoyi's frequent late coming at home after work. Things begin to fall apart when Peru starts thinking about her husband, Kukoyi who has not yet come back home although it is a bit late. The novel opens with this sad event which causes her to be restless: "Peru became restless in the choking room. Things had never been this bad, she told herself. Neither had the future appeared so bleak in Ijalode area of Orin owe town" (p. 7). The quotation shows that the situation in her home has changed so much from the onset of the novel. She has a premonitory feeling that something is amiss. Her state of mind as mentioned in the quotation below is a proof of this fact:

She sighed and glanced at the wall clock for the umpteenth time: it was already past nine and the night was pitch-dark outside. Kukoyi would have closed at two o'clock in the afternoon, yet he did not return home. Although this new design was gradually becoming a trend, he had never been so late. Even in recent times. Now he had successfully made her an unwilling mass of nervous wreck. (p. 7)

The above quotation shows the extent of her nervousness because her husband who is not used to coming home late is outside after nine o'clock at night. Although it is expected that he should close at two o'clock in the afternoon, he has opted to stay out late instead of coming back home early as usual. Through this sad beginning of the novel, the novelist intends to show how unfaithfulness starts in most couples and to denounce the moral torture that Kukoyi inflicts on his wife. The simple fact that Kukoyi has never returned home late before makes the situation unbearable for her. That is why the narrator declares:

The situation was getting critical, puzzling, and unbearable. Here she was alone, stifling but patiently waiting for a husband that refused to come. Yet, she could not discuss the subject with her mother-in-law, who was physically present but must be somewhere else in spirit. As a matter of fact, her mother in-law did not appear worried; she only sat in the corridor sanctimoniously, like an artful cat waiting to pounce on the first adventurous rat. (p. 7)

The foregoing excerpt is an indication that Kukoyi morally abuses his wife who ends up wondering what is wrong with him. The moral abuse that Peru undergoes is unbearable and she cannot talk it over with her mother-in-law whom the narrator compares to 'an artful cat waiting to pounce on the first adventurous rat.' The reason that she gives for her mother-in-law's lack of collaboration is that she is physically present but spiritually absent. A good mother-in-law should be attentive to whatever happens in her son's house and be ready to cooperate. So, Peru's mother-in-law proves to be a bad one who does not care whether her son comes back home early or not or whether he is faithful or not. Unfaithfulness is a phenomenon which men perpetrate in most cases. As a result, they neglect their wives' sexual needs and drive them into compulsory relationships because they become cold, aloof and even abusive. J. Mapfumo (2016, pp. 115) corroborates the idea when he writes:

It does not always start with the females. Sometimes, you can see that the man is in a relationship somewhere from the things he does and the lame excuses for coming home late and having no money to spend on the family. Then you retaliate even when you know that infidelity is not good.

As J. Mapfumo has revealed it in the above quotation, females are not always the first to indulge in unfaithfulness in couples. Peju is a prototype of such females since the writer tacitly portrays her as a faithful wife throughout the novel. She under goes her husband's unfaithfulness without retaliating while her mother-in-law, Anna, turns a blind eye as soon as the first manifestations of her son's unfaithfulness occur. For example, as a good wife concerned about her husband's welfare, Peju asks Kukoyi the following question when he comes back late from work: "I hope nothing serious kept you out so late?" (p. 13). However, although it is clear that Peju has no bad intention while asking her husband such a question, Anna fails to face facts by joining forces with her in order to reason him. Instead, she sees Peju's act as away of disturbing her son. Peju's plea with her husband not to stay out late at night is due to the fact that when Orindowe Vigilante Groups, who "had practically taken over from the government and police the responsibility of protecting lives and property" (p. 14) have become ruthless with anybody caught after ten in the night. Despite this plea, Anna thinks that Peju's intention while behaving like that is to attract a curse on her son. When she overhears the conversation between Kukoyi and Peju from the corridor, she darts into the room in fury and jumps into the conversation by saying:

Are you praying that he be caught? If that is your prayer, God will not answer it. My son does not deserve such prayer, go and pray for your brother to be caught by vigilantes. My son has not done nothing to be caught for. Don't attract evil onto his head. He is an honest man living a decent life. He is not a thief; he eats from his own sweat. (p.14)

The aforementioned quotation shows that as a bad mother and mother-in-law, Anna, intrudes in the affairs concerning her son and his wife and hence encourages him to indulge in unfaithfulness. Through this, the novelist denounces the behaviour of mothers-in-law who tend to consider their daughters-in-law as their rivals, especially when they live in the same house. This is a serious issue undermining most couples and families in Africa. Although the family is supposed to be a commonplace for understanding and mutual help among its members, men's families do not generally let them live in peace with their wives.

Peju herself has witnessed some of the manifestations of her husband's unfaithfulness without paying any attention to them. This situation is probably due to her blind confidence in him even though she ascribes it to her naivety and stupidity as the narrator puts it in the quotation below:

Now, in retrospect, she saw that she had been naive and stupid. Exceedingly stupid and stupidly naïve. Otherwise, why did she allow the least suspicion to go unchallenged? Why, for instance, did she also meet Ruth and Kukoyi in an amorous posture on the latter's sickbed, and still felt that this deceitful mass of amazonian [sic] muscles was tending the hospital patient? Why did she fail to challenge Ruth and Kukoyi when she found the latter resting his head on Ruth's lap with his eyes half closed just as Ruth introduced *omini* banana into his willing mouth? Why didn't she talk? Why didn't she? (p. 30)

The above quotation unveils Peju's inadvertence in her husband's unfaithfulness which she has failed to stop when she has had the opportunity to do so. Through her inadvertence, the writer intends to show how women generally fail to take every hint seriously when they catch their husbands red-handed in positions of unfaithfulness. The simple fact that Kukoyi has put his head on Ruth's lap and willingly accepts to eat the banana that she puts in his mouth is a clear indication that there is a love affair between them. Things become clear when Ruth starts paying visits to Kukoyi in his house and in his wife's presence as it is revealed in the following quotation:

She could not allow Ruth and Kukoyi to sit side by side the way she had seen them. Something told her that it was absolutely wrong for her to allow gunpowder and naked flame to live side by side. She was now itching to hear what Ruth

and Kukoyi were saying, to see how they were looking at each other, to know whether they were smiling at each other, to assess how intimate their conversation was and to feel the impact on her husband. (p. 36)

The foregoing quotation clearly shows how audacious Ruth is, as she has the cheek to come to her lover's house to challenge his wife. The novelist thus shows how a woman can intrude in a couple under the cover of the fact that she and the husband are colleagues. Ruth knows that she is an intruder or rather a husband snatcher; in the same vein, Kukoyi knows that he is cheater. This is justified by the fact that as soon as they notice that Peju is closely watching them, they find a subterfuge which consists in speaking French because they know that she does not understand French at all. They set a date as Ruth stands up to go in a very brief conversation in these terms:

- 'Au devoir, chéri [Goodbye, darling], she waved like a little girl.
- 'Coe soar à vying heures [Tonight at eight?] Kukoyi asked.
- Ruth nodded with a smile and turned. (p. 37)

The above conversation is a clear indication that Kukoyi is unfaithful to his wife. It is true that Ruth has called him 'darling', but he, himself, has set the time of their date. Even though Peju does not understand French, she lets Ruth know that she is not blind enough to believe that there is no love affair between her and Kukoyi as she stares at her and says in a composed voice: "I have observed our relationship for some time, and I believe it'll do the four of us a lot of good if you stop coming here alone" (p. 38). When Ruth asks her with defiance: "Who do you means the four of us?" (p. 38), she replies: "You and me, your husband and mine" (p. 38). Instead of trying to understand what Peju means and apologising for her intrusion in the couple's marital life, Ruth further asks: "Are you suggesting I shouldn't visit Kukoyi, if I want to?" (p. 38). That last assault rightly makes Peju lament: "I'm not suggesting. I'm saying you should stop coming here alone" (p. 38). Through Peju's reaction, it is clear that she has started suspecting her husband of unfaithfulness. This is due to the fact that she has noticed that there is something wrong with Ruth's frequent visits to their house without her husband. D. D. Lusteran (1998, p. 14) indicates that when an individual discovers that his/her partner is unfaithful, that leads to a series of questions in the mind, such as the following ones:

'How long has this been going on? Does this mean my relationship is over? How many other people know about the affair? How could I have ever trusted him? How could she have ever done such a thing to me? How could I ever trust this person again – even if I wanted to? Is this the first time it has happened? Should I confront him about this right now or should I just ignore it? Maybe it is just an infatuation, should I set a trap? Should I talk with other people about it?' (p. 4).

The series of questions listed above show the state of mind of people who feel betrayed by their partners. Peju finds it difficult to trust her husband and she has nobody to confide in. her mother-in-law whom she has tried to confined in from the onset of the novel has disappointed her by supporting and encouraging her son

Ruth thinks that she has the right to visit Kukoyi whenever she wishes simply because they are colleagues. She thus forgets that as colleagues, they should meet at work only as Peju tells her

'[. And I believe that your association as colleagues should end at work. Wait and discuss your professional matters in the staff room. Practice the teaching of strange languages in your language lab. Kukoyi is not your colleague here. At home, he's my husband.' (p. 38)

In the aforementioned quotation, Peju warns Ruth that she has no right to visit her husband in their house since she is free to do so at work. Despite that warning, Ruth fails to understand and turn back. On the contrary, she takes Peju's warning as a challenge and lies that Peju has beaten her up. Rather than improving, the situation gets worse as it is revealed in the following quotation

Meanwhile, just like the sinful eater of the forbidden fruit, Ruth was now enjoying herself. Thoroughly and almost wantonly she conceded the lion share of her time to Kukoyi. Daily, every minute of her free periods in school was spent with him sitting in the staff room, standing in the veranda or rapping under the rubber trees behind the Biology lab. (p. 46)

As the foregoing excerpt shows it, Ruth's relationship blooms with Kukoyi. Both characters are unfaithful to their partners since they are both married. Ruth seizes the opportunity of her love affair with Kukoyi to neglect her own husband. She starts being over-suspicious of her husband and finding faults with almost everything he does. The narrator sums up the situation like this:

Unfortunately, however, as her relationship bloomed with Kukoyi outside so it dimmed with Okedara back home at Bodija.

As a result, she became over-suspicious of her husband. In no time, she began to find faults with almost everything he did. Now she had just made a stunning discovery about his secret activities and was set to catch him red-handed. (p. 46)

Ruth thinks that she has found a lover to replace her husband as the foregoing quotation unveils it. She thus becomes an unfaithful predator who seeks to destroy not only Kukoyi's family, but also her affair with Okedara. So, it is clear that unfaithfulness has devastating effects. M. B. Kimeldorf (2008, p. 39) corroborates the idea when she refers to infidelity in these terms:

Infidelity is a serious and potentially devastating event in romantic relationships, and discovering that a partner has been unfaithful frequently causes a great deal of upset, distress, anger and jealousy. Often, the offense is perceived as so serious and hurtful that it leads to the dissolution of the relationship.

M. B. Kimeldorf's stand in the quotation shows that infidelity, or rather unfaithfulness, causes a great havoc to couples, and to families and society at large.

CONSEQUENCES OF UNFAITHFULNESS

Divorce and Regret

Divorce is the utmost consequence of unfaithfulness and any couple where unfaithfulness exists is doomed to resort to it. For example, the couple Kukoyi-Peju has resorted to divorce as Kukoyi, the unfaithful husband, has decided to grant his faithful wife a divorce because he wants to take Ruth as his new wife. The woman whom Kukoyi intends to marry after his divorce proves to be the divorced wife of Okedara, a friend of his, who is the man who has helped him to get a teaching job in Dagbolou Grammar School. There is no indication that Okedara has discovered Ruth is unfaithful. However, the stunning discovery that Ruth has made about his secret activities has completely ruined their couple. So, the only option left for him is to resort to divorce as it can be seen in the quotation below:

From that night, the usual trust between husband and wife seemed to have vanished. But, after extensive discussions and comparative concessions, the two parties resolved to bury the hatchet and keep mum over the reasons of

their differences. The understanding was short-lived. Hence, when it became apparent that the couple could no longer live together as one and the same flesh under one and the same roof, Okedara began to sleep out and Ruth decided to make the plunge and stick to viable substitutes. This was done without the help of any court. (p. 49)

The above quotation clearly shows that Okedara is fed up with Ruth's bad behaviour. Consequently, he sues for a divorce without the help of any court. As an unfaithful man, Kukoyi sees nothing wrong in having a love affair with such a woman. Anyway, as the saying goes, 'Birds of the same feather flock together'. In African communities, men can marry as many wives as they wish. So, unfaithfulness is anchored in African customs and traditions which favour men only. Because of this age-long male favour, Kukoyi is a hangman who acts as the victim by deciding to divorce his faithful woman who is the real victim. The divorce has led Peju to regret having lost the opportunity of getting married to a Spaniard as follows:

This stupid *abiku* [Kukoyi] had lured her into marriage and diverted her away from the adventure of a blissful life in probable wonderland. He had masqueraded as a true lover and smuggled her into a drifting boat, which he had paddled up to the midstream of an angry river before pushing her overboard. Now his mask had fallen, he could be seen in his true colours.

Definitely, she too was stupid. Right now she could still not say exactly what had attracted her to Kukoyi. Otherwise, why should she marry an *abiku*? And if it became necessary to do so, why settle for a *Kukoyi*? A dreadful betrayer who was rejected by death itself. (p. 82)

The foregoing excerpt portrays both Kukoyi and Peju as stupid people. The former for diverting and betraying his lover, and the latter for losing her opportunity of getting married with a white man and staying in Madrid, Spain, with him. Through this, the novelist intends to show not only how men divert women away from their happiness by marrying them and later abandoning them, but also how women generally lose their opportunities of having a happy marital life by following male betrayers. Peju's regret even leads her to remember what her mother has always told her as far as marriage is concerned. The narrator laments her plight as follows:

She now believed her mother's saying that marriage is was a lottery. You are a lucky fellow, if you pick a surefooted companion, and you succeeded in living happily together as life partners. Yes, her mother was right. Definitely right. Nobody could convince her of the contrary now. Marriage was a lottery and she had bought the losing ticket. (p. 82)

The aforementioned quotation further stresses Peju's regret as she remembers her mother's position about marriage which she sees as a lottery. The writer thus intends to show that marriage is a hazardous game where there is always a winner and a loser. In the same vein, he deplores the fact that women are generally the losers in such a game. In fact, marriage should not be a problem at all; on the contrary, it should be a solution to the problems of the family. That is what the narrator means when he tells us about Peju's state of mind in these terms:

Marriage was supposed to be a solution, not a problem. It was supposed to remove the pain of celibacy not to add it; to provide succour for the timorous souls joined in its sacred vows; to yield and nurture offspring of legitimate integrity, and to last for a lifetime. Why should it be otherwise in her case? Why should it become another problem leading to more problems? And why should it be short-lived? Why should it stop being a means to unite two loving souls expected to raise worthy children for posterity? (p. 82)

Through the foregoing quotation, it is clear that the novelist shows that marriage is not meant to bring about conflicts but happiness in the couple and by extension in the family. He deplores the fact that it is otherwise in Kukoyi and Peju's case where marriage has become a means of causing disunity in their couple rather than uniting them for life. Kukoyi's unfaithfulness has led to a divorce in the couple, which is a very bad thing not only for the couple but also for the children. No woman can be happy to leave her home and her children. That is why Peju is scandalised when Jengbeta, another divorced woman, congratulates her on her divorce which she rightly sees as a bad omen as it can be seen in the quotation below:

- 'Congratulations!'
- 'Yes?'
- 'I understand you're now divorced.'
- 'Is that why you are congratulating me?' Peju gaped.
- 'Of course! Are you not relieved?'
- 'Relieved?'
- 'Yes. Why should a loving and hardworking lady like you stick to an idiot by hook or by crook? It's good riddance.'

'No, it's a bad omen; divorcing a wife or a husband is like sowing the portentous seeds of trial and tribulations for our children to reap. It should give worries, not relief. Kukoyi has always been a stranger to these children, and our separation can only spell doom for the future of the family.' (p. 83)

The above quotation clearly reveals children's importance in a family and the absurdity of divorce. Through it, the writer uncovers the fact that marriage and children are so important that there is no need for a couple with children to indulge in divorce. When divorce occurs in such a couple, children suffer most from the separation of their parents. They will terribly miss their mother as soon as she leaves the home. For that reason, she has the obligation to pay them regular visits, especially when they are under eighteen years of age. So, Peju has the right to pay visits to her children whenever she wants after the divorce. However, Kukoyi has beaten her when she has visited her children in his house after the divorce. The following quotation is an illustration: "Kukoyi met her with a rude slap. In a momentary defensive move, she stepped back instinctively. Yet, Kukoyi charged at her to deal a stronger blow" (p. 100). This raises the problem of violence against women whose perpetrators are men due to the latter are unfaithfulness. Through Kukoyi's awkward reaction, it is clear that Jengbeta is right to advise Peju to stay away from her stupid husband and her children, rather than imposing herself on him as revealed in the quotation below:

'And you should impose yourself on a man? Can you compel a penis to rise? If Kukoyi is bent on ruining his children's future, can you stop him?'

'Yes, if I stay around. I'm sure I can correct certain things, if I stich by my children. If I go, everything will be out of order.' (p. 83)

The above-mentioned quotation implies that Peju is keen on being near her children because she entertains hopes of correcting certain things so that everything should be in order. In her intuition, waiting till the children grow up to explain the matter to them will be belated and useless. So, she is eager to strike while the iron is still hot. Through her act,

the novelist shows the devotion of a good mother for her children's welfare even after divorce. Rather than forgetting about her children, she is ready to venture in Kukoyi's house for their sake. Despite Jengbeta's insistence, she would not turn back as it can be seen in the following quotation:

- 'Won't you explain to your kids when they grow up?'
- 'Such explanations will be belated and of no use to children who would have been neglected and perverted by an irresponsible father. You can't straighten a dried fish which has been curved.'
- 'Suppose you were dead: wouldn't your children live their lives?'
- 'Of course, they would. But I'm not dead, that makes a difference. I have some responsibilities as a mother.' (p. 83)

The foregoing quotation shows that although Peju knows the implications of divorce, she wants to fulfil her responsibilities as a good mother. She does not want her former husband to neglect and pervert her children who are so dear to her. The novelist thus intends to show that divorce induces a problem inherent in the children's education and care. It means that once the divorced mother totally leaves her kids, they are in danger insofar as their father and their step-mother, i.e. their father's new wife, fail to educate them and take care of them decently. The narrator tells us about Peju's state of mind after the divorce is granted in these terms:

Her marriage with Kukoyi had now become history. She had to face the reality of a broken home. As it appeared to her, a broken home was like a clay pot shattered into bits: you can't easily pick and glue the pieces together for effective use. But she must not allow her past to paralyse her future. She had to brace up. (p. 85)

Peju thinks that her marriage with Kukoyi is over as it is revealed in the foregoing excerpt. She accepts the reality that her home is broken as she compares a broken home with a clay pot which once shattered into bits becomes useless. Through this, the writer deplores the fact that faithful women end up in divorce which becomes a predicament for them. However, the indelicate customary court President has hastened Peju's predicament. The narrator sums up the situation like this:

She felt there were two strong reasons why she could get even with the President. First, he was corrupt and unfit for the job of customary court judge. Then he was partly responsible for her terminal plight. From her own assessment of Dogo's involvement in her matrimonial career, it was clear that he had aided and abetted her tormentors by rushing the case. (p. 86)

The aforementioned quotation clearly shows that the court President is corrupt. He is partly responsible for Peju's terminal plight insofar as in the ultimate analysis, he has granted a biased divorce. He fails to adjourn the case as agreed with Peju and takes bribe from one party rather than doing his work professionally and without corruption. The novelist thus denounces corruption in law courts in general and in customary courts in particular. When Peju goes to court for a complaint, the President of the court addresses her in these terms: "Well it is a pity. Things did not work out the way we anticipated" (p.87). To justify his act, he further declares:

'It was clear from Mr Aralamo's evidence that he no longer loved you. He had proved it beyond all reasonable doubt. Maybe he loves somebody else, maybe not, but he no longer loves you. In such a circumstance, my court will be doing the family no good, if we refuse to grant a divorce. A one-sided love is dangerous and as fruitless as the mating of two rams. A normal marriage is a union of two willing hands; when one is withdrawn, the other must retreat. And, in this

particular case, we had to consider the interest of the two parties in relation to that of the four children. And, believe me, the welfare of the children was paramount in our minds. It was the deciding factor.' (p. 87)

The quotation shows that Kukoyi has obtained a divorce by going to court where he has the help of a corrupt court President. Of course, the divorce has taken place in an illegal way since there has been no court audience in the presence of both parties. Through this awkward court procedure, the novelist intends to denounce the bad practices which are in vogue in African courts due to bribery. The judiciary power is thus corrupt through and through in the society depicted in the novel, and this mirrors what happens in Africa at large.

The Husband's Suffering and Tragedy in the Family

Kukoyi's unfaithfulness leads him to bring trouble in his family. For instance, despite Peju's warning, Ruth fails to understand her and turn back. On the contrary, she lies that Peju has beaten her up and this makes Peju interject: "Don't tell lies" [...]. You provoked and assaulted me" (p. 42). From this point, she challenges Peju to a fighting these words: "No stories! You hear? We shall settle the matter here and now. Before you return to your territorial waters and begin to feel untouchable" (p. 42). Peju rightly sees Ruth's behaviour as a challenge, as she charges:

'I will fight you on a neutral ground any day. Like a miscreant, you have carried your alms beyond the mosque and have no reverence for the shrine; you will suffer the lot of an infidel. If a snail extends its tentacles into a salty pitch, it will die natural death. You'd better retract your tentacles from my own territory. Go and perpetrate your mischief elsewhere.' (p. 42)

The foregoing quotation shows that Peju has no intention to fight on the spot. She postpones the fight on any day. She rightly compares Ruth to a miscreant and qualifies her as an infidel since she is still a married woman. Peju indulges in proverbial language to make Ruth come back to her senses. She advises her to retract her tentacles from her own territory and go and perpetrate her mischief elsewhere. Rather than taking Peju words seriously and abdicating, Ruth opts to fight with her straight away as she has previously said. The narrator tells us about the fight in these terms:

Ruth made no further comments. She charged forward. In a swift move she snatched Peju's shoulder bag, threw it into the gutter and pushed the owner. Peju staggered backward. But, like a football hurriedly parried by the goalkeeper, Peju was tossed back by Jumoke, Ruth's companion. She dashed forward and bumped into her attacker as she received two quick slaps from the rear and temporarily went blind. She rubbed up the blindness from her eyes and the pains from unsuspecting cheeks. [...].

Peju thrust her right hand into the collar of Ruth's dress and tore it down. Ruth found herself almost naked. She turned to pick a club which appeared to have been put to hand on purpose. But, while she hurried to the weapon, Jumoke was already face to face with Peju to engage her in a single combat. Peju did not notice the club in Ruth's hand until it landed on her back and sent a burning message down the whole of her nervous system. She tumbled backwards and slumped. (p. 42)

The aforementioned excerpt clearly shows that the fight is between Peju and two friends, Ruth and Jumoke. So, it is an uneven fight with unequal arms because Peju is alone while her adversaries are two. In addition, while she is single-handed, Ruth has a club. Through the fight, the novelist unveils the dangers which an unfaithful husband exposes his wife to. Ruth is aware of the fact that she is an intruder and that what she and her friend, Jumoke, have done to Peju is extremely bad. That is why they have fled from the scene of the fight as it can be seen in the following quotation:

Ruth took to her heels gleefully followed by her companion. A few passers-by rushed to Peju's rescue. Mama Alakara, in front of whose stall she has slumped, urgently brought some cold water, which was poured on Peju's head. Gradually, she came round and was helped to her feet.

She stood transfixed for a long minute staring at her sympathisers. (p. 43)

The above quotation reveals that Ruth and her companion are mere cowards who cannot assume their actions. In addition, it shows that Peju has a lot of sympathisers in the vicinity. Rather than blaming Ruth for the fight, her mother-in-law, Anna, says: "Are you better? Wouldn't you have attacked everyone yourself? I know that Ruth is a kind-hearted lady, and I wonder why you must start finding faults with her now. Nobody is perfect" (p. 45). Kukoyi has done nothing to solve the problem. He appears as an irresponsible head of family. As a result, Ruth takes advantage of his irresponsibility to go to his house after the fight to have his son arrested instead of Peju who is absent. The following conversation between Kukoyi's friend, Gbolahan, and Ruth is very telling:

'My intention was to get Peju arrested.'

'Then I don't seem to understand. If a mother offends you, why arrest the son? Don't our people say that the King cuts only the finger that transgresses? Why make the whole hand leprous? Why must we depart from the tradition?'

'I did nothing abnormal, sir. I only led the policeman to Ijalode and Peju was absent. There, on the spot, the officer assessed the situation, and took what he considered to be a pragmatic decision. According to him, since Peju was absent, the only way to force her to show up was to keep her son in police custody. So he arrested Yinka. I couldn't have interfered with his job.' (pp. 50-51)

From the above-mentioned excerpt, it is clear that Ruth deliberately victimises herself by making the police arrest the real victim's son in her absence. Yinka, whom the policeman has arrested in substitution for her mother, has nothing to do with the fight between Peju and Ruth. In addition, Peju is the only person who could have asked for the services of the police since she is the one whom Ruth and her companion, Jumoke, have attacked and wounded. Through this, the writer denounces the police who do not always investigate the cases brought to them thoroughly before reacting. In such circumstances, they imprison innocent people to the detriment of the real guilty people who are false victims.

Kukoyi has indulged in unfaithfulness which has culminated in divorce simply because he hopes to marry Ruth. Unfortunately, his hope soon breaks down because Ruth rejects him and refuses to marry him in a pitiless way. Peju draws the conclusion as far as the divorce and Kukoyi's love affair with Ruth are concerned in these terms:

'[] parting with you was more of a blessing in disguise. You thought you were performing some punitive wonders at the time, but you only drove me out to fortune. In your own case, what did the divorce profit you? Nothing. Ruth has ruined you economically; she has wrecked you socially and finished you morally. She has messed you up and dumped you out in the cold (p. 101)

The above quotation corroborates the saying that 'He who laughs last laughs longest' because Peju is far better off than Kukoyi whom Ruth has thoroughly ruined and humiliated. As far as Peju is concerned, she is a faithful wife and no man has humiliated her, contrary to Kukoyi, an unfaithful husband, whom Ruth has humiliated. The following quotation unveils an instance of his humiliation:

'Who is the gentleman?' Kukoyi pointed.

Ruth laughed humourlessly. 'Is that your mission? Is that why you decided to drop in on me so late in the night? Has the gentleman hurt you in any way?'

'I don't want to be hurt before I ask questions.'

'Marvellous! I shall not hurt you before I give you answers.... You're meeting Mr Owolafe: he is the man I am planning to marry. Does that satisfy your curiosity?'

'He is the man you are *planning to marry*?' Kukoyi echoed, obviously failing to make the statement sound better than a rhetorical question. He stepped back and slowly sank into a chair, not believing his ears, not trusting his eyes; only staring at his long standing in amorata. (p. 106)

The foregoing quotation reveals that Ruth unveils her real intention and shows Kukoyi that she does not really love him. Although she has not yet broken with Kukoyi, she already has another pretender. So, after ruining him economically, she reveals her true hidden intention to him by ruining him socially and morally. By rejecting his lovely wife for another woman who proves to be an unfaithful divorced woman, Kukoyi has probably not taken into account the saying that 'All that glitters is not gold.' Needless to say, the woman he intends to marry to replace his faithful wife proves to be a mere whore. Through Kukoyi's predicament, the novelist intends to show that any married man should be faithful and take care of his wife and children.

The negative aspects of unfaithfulness are mentioned in the Holy Bible. In fact, in second book of Samuel, chapter 12, from verse 11 to verse 12, David has raped Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. Consequently, she gets pregnant and then God sends a curse on David because what he has done is abomination. At the end of the story, David has acknowledged that what he has done is illegal. R. Nathan (2013, p. 1) draws on David's example in his sermon in these terms:

Through David, we are reminded that adulterers cannot be classified – they can be rich (like David) or poor, have a fulfilling physical relationship with their spouse and even profess Jesus as their savior. Any person can commit adultery and the wisdom of Jesus reveals that sin begins with our thought life and our hearts. Significant moral compromise occurs after a person has been making compromises in their hearts, in their choices, for years before the big fall. Each time we compromise our character, we are saying that God's grace is not enough for us, that what He has already given us is not enough. When we say that God's grace is not enough for us we end up making big mistakes in our lives. Even with our mistakes, we have hope in the healing power of Jesus over our hearts, minds, marriages, and families [...].

In the above excerpt, Nathan addresses the issue of adultery by examining the most famous act of adultery in human history: that of David and Bathsheba. He says that any person who thinks that God's grace is not enough for him ends up making big mistakes in his life. For instance, God has given Kukoyi a good wife, which is a grace. However, he is not satisfied and consequently ends up making a big mistake by indulging in unfaithfulness. His unfaithfulness which has led him to poverty sets him in a conflictual situation with his children. Peju has been at the same time a husband and a wife in the family even before their divorce. In other words, she provides all the needs in house since the beginning of her husband's unfaithfulness. As she has left the conjugal house after the divorce, Kukoyi is unable to fend for his children. The situation has become so critical that Yinka, one of his children, gets into conflict with him and asks to go and live with his mother. The following quotation is an illustration:

- 'I'm moving to Araromi this morning,' Yinka insisted.
- 'I won't allow you,' Kukoyi countered.
- 'Then, I will go without your leave.'
- 'You can't let me down.'
- 'Didn't you let the whole family down when it mattered? Even now you cannot take proper care of us? When I brought my admission letter to Orindowe State University, could you pay the school fees? What do I stand to lose, if I leave without your permission?'
- 'Whether rich or poor, I'm your father.'(p. 137)

In the foregoing quotation, Yinka has told his father the naked truth. Although he is a child, he clearly knows what is happening in the family. He has even told him that their mother has been responsible for their lives and that Kukoyi has done nothing for them. The novelist thus shows that children are the innocent victims of their parents' unfaithfulness, especially when it leads to divorce. For instance, Yinka goes further by replying to his father:

Yes, my biological father. But when it comes to financial responsibility, mother is my father. It takes more than the physical ability to impregnate a woman, to be acknowledged as a true father. It takes love, loyalty, vision, good planning, and commitment to the general welfare of the family. For instance, if you cannot educate four children, why have them. Did you forget what I told you last night? If I were you, I'd move straight to Araromi. (p.137)

What Yinka has said in the excerpt expresses his state of mind. It is a token that he is really fed up with their father's incapability to cope with the financial problems of the family. He overtly accuses Kukoyi of lacking essential things such as love, loyalty, vision, good planning, and commitment to the general welfare of his family. Yinka does not see the need for Kukoyi to have four children if he cannot educate them. The child implicitly draws a parallel between Kukoyi and Peju who has all those qualities that their father does not have. For that reason, he thinks that the only option left is to go and live with his mother. Through the child's stand, the novelist reveals that children are the judges of their parents and that they observe whatever is going on in the family.

Kukoyi opts to hire a gang to beat Ruth up and she has been wounded. Ruth narrates all this to her new lover who avenges her by sending a group of assassins to beat Kukoyi. Jengbeta, a friend of Peju's, tells her about Kukoyi's attack in these terms: "He was attacked by hired assassins" (p. 141). As a result of the attack, the assassins have wounded Kukoyi who ends up being brought to hospital. This is a good lesson at stake, and every man should take it very seriously in order to avoid trouble in their couples. For example, if Kukoyi had been faithful to his wife, this would not have happened. Through his attack, the novelist intends to show the fate awaiting unfaithful men.

Owolafe considers the fact that Kukoyi is out of condition after the attack as a great mistake. The following quotation proves it: "I wanted Kukoyi away to be taught a lesson; that was all. And I told you so"(p. 146). So, it is clear that his intention is not to make the assassins hurt Kukoyi. He has just sent them to beat him and teach him a lesson so as to make him run away from Ruth. Owolafe is further scandalised when he notices that Ruth wants to see Kukoyi dead as she tells him: "So you still want an affair with him?" (p. 146). The quotation clearly reveals that Ruth does not want Kukoyi to be alive. Those two factors have caused Owolafe to part with her through beating. The narrator recounts the scene in these terms:

He smacked her cheeks and pushed her away to crash against the wall. [...]. Then, as if urged by an internal demon, Owolafe removed his belt. He gripped the buckled end in his right hand and despatched three burning lashes round her trunk.

[...] Ruth scrambled to her feet. Owolafe kicked her back. She broke away with urgency holding her buttocks for soothing effects as she escaped into the bathroom. (p. 146)

Betraying men has become Ruth's hobby because she does not really love them. On the contrary, she runs after the benefits that she can derive from the so-called love. As a result, she always ends up spoiling her chance. That is what Owolafe means when he tells her: "You have spoilt your chance" [...]. 'Never again should you come to me for anything! You hear that? Never again'" (pp. 146-147). It is, therefore, clear that Owolafe has rejected Ruth.

The assassins' attack has also caused the death of an innocent girl, Funke, who lives with Kukoyi, and this further underlines the tragedy inherent in unfaithfulness. That tragedy occurs as soon as the girl identifies one of the assassins who have beaten Kukoyi. The writer makes Mrs Egunleti, one of the characters in the novel; tell us about the scene in these terms: "Funke recognised one of them and childishly called out his name. They were shocked. So, immediately, to avoid embarrassment and consequent police case, they shot her dead. Then, they asked Kukoyi whether he was still interested in Ruth and her property" (p.149). Kukoyi has therefore paid for his unfaithfulness with the attack which has brought him to hospital and caused the death of an innocent girl, Funke.

Lack of Cooperation in the Attempt to Solve the Problem

Society is an extension of families because a child is educated and brought up in a family which is part and parcel of society. So, families constitute the nucleus of society insofar as there is no society without families. The members of a given family try to find solutions to any problem which arises within that family. That is why Peju goes to her father-in-law in tears to find solutions to her conjugal problems. Kukoyi's father, Dairo, is scandalised when Peju goes to him in tears for the third time in two weeks. He condemns his son's behaviour in these words:

'I wonder who taught this bastard that you have to disown one wife before you can marry another. Besides, in spite of my polygamous tendencies, I have never made advances to another man's wife. Last night, Peju ran to me in tears for the third time in two weeks. Then I asked myself: why should Kukoyi maltreat a devoted, pleasant, loyal, honourable mother of four? Now I know why. It is because those who have heads have no caps, and it has pleased the Almighty to bestow beautiful caps on those who have no heads. Kukoyi has no head.' (pp. 62-63)

Although Kukoyi's father, Dairo, has married five wives, he strongly condemns his son's will to disown Peju before he can marry another wife who proves to be another man's wife. So, he immediately decides to gather the extended family. This may allow the family members to give their viewpoints and find collective solutions to the problem. So, there is no wonder when one of the elders of the family, namely Chief Egunleti, says: "In Ifeland, the purpose of elders' gathering is to be wiser; wisdom and common sense never to fail" (p. 63). The writer thus makes Dairo, Kukoyi's father, indulge in proverbial language to expatiate further on his son's inability to face facts. Ogundimu uses this to show how enlightened Kukoyi's father is despite the fact that he is a polygamous man. When Chief Egunleti asks the couple to narrate their differences, Pejubriefly narrates the story. The narrator tells us about it in these terms:

Peju's account was brief and factual. But she drew her conclusion in a painful drawl.

'Kukoyi has been banding together with Ruth to give our home a bad name. Probably, he believes that he has been spiting me, but I think he's making a mistake. I know that whatever image he carves for me or himself is what people will see of the family from without and that is what will determine the amount of respect that we shall earn or lose as a social unit. It is wrong for Kukoyi to turn his back on common sense. It is wrong for him to face the doorstep and begin to urinate into his own room' (p. 64)

The aforementioned excerpt makes Peju's stand clear as she exposes the grievances that she has against her blindfolded husband. When one of the elders, Ramoni, asks her: "Are you passing a judgement already...?" (p. 64), she laments: "Kukoyi should not destroy our children's home. If he wants a second wife, let him take one, I am not bothered. But he should not go for Ruth, she is another man's wife...." (p.64). During the gathering, when Peju has finished telling the story which has led to their divorce, the elders have asked Kukoyi to rectify what is wrong in what Peju has said. Surprisingly, he has merely said: "I have nothing to say"(p.65). However, he clearly tells the elders that he wants a divorce. The quotation below justifies that fact:

Kukoyi looked around and at all faces, and has given a faint smile, then uttered these words: 'You did best for me to marry Peju. That was all I needed from you at the time. Whatever happens to the marriage thereafter is my responsibility; and my alone.' As your elders say, once *alágemon*, a perfect dancer, has been delivered of her baby, the baby's head's lack of proficiency in the art of dancing is the baby headache. Please let that wisdom prevail, leave me my worries. Let me solve my matrimonial problems my own way. (p.66)

In the above-mentioned quotation, Kukoyi indulges in proverbial language to show the audience that he old enough to make his own decisions without their interference. He thinks that he is accountable to nobody. While publicly declaring that whatever happens after his marriage is his responsibility, he is breaking family ties which are primordial in Africa. Through his behaviour, the novelist intends to show how unfaithfulness can blind men to the point of making them lose the sense of good morals. He refuses to reconsider his position despite the intervention of the elders of the very family that he belongs to. Of course, they cannot allow him to do whatever he wants because his problems are also theirs. The narrator tells us about the reply of one of them, namely Gbolahan, in these terms:

We cannot allow that,' [...]. 'If you close your eyes for bad people to pass, good people will also pass in the interval. Obviously, you may not like to see Peju until this matter is resolved. We understand. But as we have faith in both of you, we believe you cannot shun seeing us; It [sic] is not all couples that can be left to their own devices.'

'A wife who has a living issue by her husband has ceased to be a resident parasite. With four children to her credit, Peju has turned a permanent member of the Aralamo family.

Her welfare, like that of her children, is already our business. So, make your statement and give her a warning, as you may deem necessary. But you must try and accommodate her. Marriage is unlike football where you continue a match with just any substitute that comes on to the pitch. A couple must remain a couple. And a wife is a wife mainly because she is the mother of your children...' (p.66)

In the above quotation, Gbolahan makes it clear that Peju has become a permanent member of the Aralamo family since she already has four children with Kukoyi. He goes further to compare marriage with football by saying that there is no substitute in marriage contrarily to a match which continues with just any substitute that comes on the pitch. According

to him, there is no reason why the couple should disappear because of the simple fact that there are children in it. In the same vein, Chief Egunleti tells Kukoyi what follows:

[]. You're a fool, an irresponsible fool, a reckless gambler, an erratic coward, a culpable betrayer, a confused adventurer, a complete bastard. Do you think you can achieve lasting peace with short-term strategies and frustrating jolts? Do you? I am stunned and I am ashamed. How can you take a crucial step of that nature without informing any of us? Whose support do you have?' (p. 68)

The successive insults that Chief Egunleti has heaped on Kukoyi in the foregoing except show the extent of the old man's wrath. The only thing that Kukoyi has to say after his father has enjoined him to tell them his story is: "It's pointless,' [...]. 'The case is already beyond this gathering'" (p. 68) His awkward intervention has got on his father's nerves as he declares:

You're a true bastard. If you were my true son, you would behave differently; you might even marry two or more wives, but it would still be without all this fuss. I know there is peace in a family only for as long as the bastards among them have not matured. Now, you are full-grown bastard and you don't want peace. But watch it! The feat achieved by the talking drum in speaking through the nose is not attainable without the contribution of fingernails.'

Why are you overblowing yourself with self-importance? You are an insignificant part of a large and united family. Your self-esteem cannot divide us. It may only single you out as a senseless black sheep. And, if a river severs its link from where it rose, it is on its way to getting dry. You are gradually blundering your way to perdition.' (pp. 68-69)

In the aforementioned quotation, Kukoyi's father indulges in proverbial language to make him see the gravity of his deeds. Through what the old man has said, the novelist intends to show the importance of the family and the readiness of its members to oust any stubborn member. Kukoyi thus appears as a lost member of the Aralamo family which is a large and untied family. It clear that Kukoyi has failed to cooperate in his extended family members' attempt to solve the problem. The narrator tells us about Peju's state of mind in these terms: "'He has ruined my life,' Peju broke down in tears, as it suddenly dawned on her that the family meeting at Orile had solved no problem. On the contrary, it has furnished Kukoyi another opportunity to publicly humiliate her and tell the whole world that she was an undesirable partner, almost as bad as an irresponsible failure" (p. 69). So, Peju is desperate and thinks that everything is lost, even though Chief Egunleti assuredly tells her: "Don't worry, Peju, we shall stop him" (p. 69). She immediately requests whether she can ask the audience a question. As soon as Chief Egunleti consents, she says:

Our marriage was contracted in the most traditional way. How can a court dissolve a traditional marriage since it had no hand in its establishment? Can't you prevail on Kukoyi to withdraw the case? Why should we go to court at all? Why must we embarrass ourselves and shame our family?' (p. 70)

Peju's wise intervention in the above-mentioned excerpt raises the problem of the interference of the court with traditional affairs even though it is a customary court. If the court follows the normal course of things, it should deal with any case of divorce through an audience. So, the court has no right whatsoever to grant a divorce without a formal audience. The following suggestion made by Chief Egunleti is therefore welcome: "Let us see the President of the Court

and talk with him, he is a distant relation. We shall request to settle the matter out of court. Hence, like the proverbial wild rabbit, Kukoyi will come and lie by the home fire. We shall talk sense into his stubborn head” (p. 70). Ramoni goes further and says: “If the family insists and the President agrees, Kukoyi will have no choice, we shall come back and settle the matter here at home” (p. 70). They pay a visit to the President who pledges his support for a united family and even accepts bribe from Ramoni as it appears in the excerpt below:

The President pledged his support for a united family and requested necessary details which were given to him. He reiterated his commitment to officially advise the family to settle the case out of court, following their own proposition. Peju went home satisfied that her marriage was going to be saved and her children’s future secure.

However, refusing to leave anything to chance, Ramoni repeated the call alone. And, before departing this time, he gave his host a brown envelope, beautifully impregnated with fifty naira notes. The President accepted the offer gratefully and saw his visitor off with broad smiles. Once again he gave his word to *do something* for the sake of the family and the future of the innocent children. (p. 73)

As revealed in the above excerpt, the President has taken bribe from Ramoni and feigns to be willing to help the Aralamo family by playing ball. The members of the Aralamo family have protested against Kukoyi’s intention to divorce. They have even gone to court to stop him, but in vain. He has finally granted it. Peju state of mind in the following quotation shows the extent of corruption in the judiciary power of her community:

However, in spite of her anguish confusion, the lesson stood out clearly in her mind. Justice was like a game in which the players in two opposing camps could never play a draw: you were either a winner or a loser. No middle course. Yet, at Oribande customary court, it was not possible to win by accident. The decisive factor was always there: you would win if you ensured that the judge was adequately paid to be fair, or if you ensured that he was offered enough inducement to stab justice in the back. (p. 74)

The foregoing quotation shows that in the customary court of the community, the person who is right is not forcibly the winner. On the contrary, the person who spends the highest amount of money to bribe the judges is the winner whether he is the victim or not. The narrator denigrates the corrupt court President in these terms:

What kind of President was this? A man trusted and appointed to dispense local justice, who busied himself sowing confusion? A citizen paid to make justice simple and bring it closer to the people, who turned around to banish fair play and promote warped judgement? An indigenous judge expected to understand the people’s customs and pave the way for reconciliation where possible, who annulled a fifteen year old [sic] marriage just like that? No, this nasty President should be challenged. (pp. 74-75)

It is evident from the above-mentioned quotation that the President is not doing his job professionally. The series of rhetorical and pejorative questions that the narrator has asked about him is an indication that he is serving himself rather than serving the people. So, Alhaji Ramoni is right when he affirms: “We shall file an appeal against that judgement” (p. 76). However, Peju sees the problem from a different angle as she bluntly declines Ramoni’s affirmation as follows: “‘It won’t be necessary,’ [...]. ‘You’ve tried your best and the family have pulled their weight. But, it seems that, once Kukoyi’s mind was made up for him by Bankole and Mama, nobody else could prevail on him to change it’” (pp. 76-77). In the same vein, Egunleti intones:

Unfortunately,' [...], 'Bankole is a noxious influence. So is Anna. And, naturally, when [the] anus gives birth, the slick kid can only smell bad. That is the problem with Anna and her son. It will take a lot of prayers for Kukoyi to live a successfully [sic] life. Certainly, he cannot do so until he learns to have a mind of his own.' (p. 77)

In the foregoing excerpt, Egunleti indulges in proverbial language to insinuate that Kukoyi has taken after her mother and thus justifies the saying that 'Birds of a feather flock together.' Naturally, the anus stinks, and Anna stands for it in the proverb whereas Kukoyi stands for the kid who smells bad since he has come out of the anus. Peju seems to be against the reconciliation that Alhaji Ramoni advocates through an appeal. The following conversation reveals that fact:

That is too late now.' [...], 'Kukoyi is forty-two, and I am thirty-nine. If he has been myopic enough to drain his physical energies and burn his financial resources to get a fifteen year old [sic] marriage dissolved the way he did, then I want the marriage to remain dissolved. There's no need to appeal. No more.'

Don't you think we may win if we do?'

Win? I don't want to consider the option any longer. How can Kukoyi remain tied to Ruth's apron strings and still be faithful to me and useful to his children? Everything has been so amazingly hurried and unexpected. I must start thinking beyond Kukoyi from now on. Besides, we all thought we could get round the judgement. See where we have found ourselves, see what has happened. See that hypocrite of a judge who promised to do something for the sake of the children and keep adjourning the case till the matter was settled out of court.' (p. 77)

The above-mentioned quotation shows that Peju is fed up with the situation so much so that she loses hope. She declares that she wants the marriage to remain dissolved because she thinks that there is no other alternative left. She does not feel like considering the option that she may win the appeal that Alhaji Ramoni has suggested

Apart from the family nucleus, the church has played an important part in the solution of the problem in Kukoyi's family. Yinka is the one who has alerted the church by going to Elder Fatoki and Gbolahan who are members of the Church Association. When the men of God have come forward to solve the case of the Kukoyi family, they first of all, complain and reproach Kukoyi with being the instigator of evil in his family. Then, Fatoki has invited Kukoyi and his family, especially Anna, to close their eyes for prayer so as bring peace and harmony in the family. Part of the prayer said by Fatoki reads:

As God the Creator you blessed the marriage with children, good and thoughtful children, one of whom you made instrumental to our being here today.'

We thank you for your love. But, Father, the Devil interfered with your work and threw the couple off your sacred track. Instead of going to the Church of God, they went to the court of law. The judgement has become history. I pray for your Holy Spirit to now descend, redeem their faith in each other and preserve their children's future.

'God of love, step in. Manifest your power and overthrow the Devil. Take control of Kukoyi's heart, guide his thoughts, direct his feelings, stay with him and bless his home. Remove from his life whatsoever and whosoever will put obstacles in the way of his progress. We thank you, Father because you have heard our prayers. In Jesus' name we pray.'

'Amen.' (pp.126-127)

The prayer displayed in the above excerpt is said in order to overthrow the Devil at the origin of the discord in Kukoyi's family. It is meant to restore peace in the family, and it is particularly directed towards Kukoyi who is

responsible for the situation although he is the head of the family. Through Fatoki's prayer, the novelist intends to show the importance of prayers in the solution of conjugal problems. He makes Fatoki and Gbolahan strongly advise Anna to continue praying for her son so as to maintain the power of the prayer over him. This appears as the *sine qua non* to prevent Kukoyi from going back to evil or rather to the Devil. The writer thus exhorts people to have faith in God and to pray to conjure the Devil away so as to avoid doing evil and always do only good. He makes Kukoyi come back to his senses after the prayer. Indeed, Kukoyi realises that evil has entered his family as it appears in this excerpt:

He remained confused till bedtime. Wasn't Elder Fatoki right? He kept asking himself. Obviously, the Devil had publicly interfered with his family life. There was no denying that. Also, was it not glaring that Ruth was aiding the Devil and putting obstacles in the way of his progress? Socially, economically and psychologically? Had he not invested time, energy and almost all his earnings in satisfying her whims and caprices? Did he not send her son to the boarding house, while his own children wallowed in arrant paucity of care and funds? (p. 127)

The aforementioned excerpt shows that Kukoyi is aware of the fact that the Devil has really entered his family. He also knows that Ruth has aided the Devil. So, his son, Yinka is right when he says that "[...] she was the family's number one enemy, because she had forced their mother out of Ijalode and usurped her place" (p. 127). Kukoyi's narrow escape from the Devil implies that when we have a problem, we have to turn to God.

According to S. Mutunda (2017, p. 52), "It is fair to say that Marxism shares a lot in common with feminism because both seek the overthrow of dictatorship and the emancipation of the oppressed or the marginalized. These deprived groups must take their destiny into their own hands and reclaim their rightful place in society." Kukoyi has marginalised his wife through unfaithfulness. Women play an important role in society; however, men daily oppress them. P. J. Olubunmi Smith (1989, p. 15) deplors women's plight in these terms:

Women's role is essentially associated with the home. Their biological and economic roles are linked, defined them first and foremost as 'producers of producers'. They are the sole guardians of fertility, a role which is taken for granted. They are wives, mothers, and domestics with no rights to their own persons but exist only in the service of the children, husbands, and husbands' families.

The aforementioned quotation clearly shows that women's image is tarnished in society. Despite the numerous roles that they are assigned, they face their husbands' unfaithfulness. However, they struggle for the integration of their families and consequently show their determination in society.

P. Mkgwe (2008, p. 16) argues that "African feminism emphasizes autonomy and co-operation, nature over culture, the centrality of children, multiple mothering and kinship. Indeed, African feminism emphasizes cooperation with men, the affirmation of motherhood and the family [...]." Although Peju seeks cooperation with Kukoyi, affirms her motherhood and advocates the unity of her family, Kukoyi fails to play ball. Instead of looking in the same direction with his wife, he opts for the dislocation of his family. The centrality of the children is not his concern. He sees divorce as the extreme solution to crown his unfaithfulness.

Another person who has failed to cooperate in the solution of the problem is the court President. Although she lives in a patriarchal society where all women are second class citizens, Peju goes to court to ask the corrupt President, Dogo, why he has granted the divorce after having promised to act for the sake of family as I have mentioned it earlier. As

she is not satisfied with the awkward way in which the court President has handled her divorce with Kukoyi, she decides to go to high court to pursue the case. She does this with the help of a secretary at the High Court, Moni, who automatically takes the case seriously. The following quotation is an illustration:

'There wasn't much he could do. But, seriously, not many have ever been interested in Dogo's case before now. With all the information you've given me, I think enough should be enough. And the time is just ripe: Dogo's contractual appointment is due for renewal next month. I'll talk with Oga and the CR; they will not renew his contract. That is a promise.' (p. 98)

The foregoing quotation is an indication that the indelicate court President's downfall is not far from coming. Through that quotation, it is clear that Moni is determined to prop up her friend's complaint and thus dispense justice. Her determination shows that she intends to make sure that women do not fall victim of court Presidents in society through her friend's case. She fulfils her promise by successfully having Dogo ousted from the court. The quotation below justifies that fact:

Moni's word was not given in vain, neither was she boastful about it. Like she said, she stepped in and, the following month, Dogo was eased out of office. Once again it became apparent to Peju that knowing the right calibre of people in the right quarters was a sine qua non to enjoy some semblance of justice and fair hearing. (p. 98)

Dogo's ousting from the court for granting a biased divorce because he is corrupt is a hint that women's fight against unfaithfulness is worthy. Even Kukoyi, himself, soon realises that he has made a great mistake by indulging in unfaithfulness and by resorting to divorce. He starts regretting as soon as he becomes aware of the consequences of his action on his family. A man needs a wife not only to satisfy him sexually but also to be a prop for him and his family. That is why three years after the divorce, Kukoyi comes back to his wife and tries to use his son, Yinka, as an intermediary to solve their marital problem as it appears in the following quotation:

'Why do we need an intermediary?' Peju said.

'Yinka is not an intermediary, he is our son, he must be part of our solution to the problem. You see... I've reviewed my life in the past three years, and I think a lot of things have gone dangerously amiss: we must talk them over.'

'Go and talk them over with Bankole and Mama. We're divorced. I've learnt to live my life without you and my children can do without your care.'

'I understand your feelings. But I cannot do without the children and I can no longer do without you. The divorce has made a complete shambles of my life. Everything has gone topsy-turvy since we separated.' (pp. 153-154)

From the above-mentioned excerpt, it is clear that Kukoyi intends to put an end to the divorce that he has willingly granted his wife. He appears as an egoistic man who thinks his life is a shambles and completely forgets his wife's shambles as the sole victim in the divorce insofar as he has broken her life through it. So, Peju is right when she asks herself a series of questions as follows:

Did he say his life was a shambles? Peju thought. What about hers? Did he care to know that hers had completely broken down since the divorce? That she had lost her psychological and social balance? That she was still suffering somehow in spite of the money she was making? (p. 154)

The only option left to Kukoyi is to apologies to his wife for all the wrong he has done to her after indulging in the use of a parable. The following quotation reveals that fact: "Then, self-consciously, Kukoyi brought out a little flower from his breast pocket and held it out to his former wife. Please darling, accept my *mójúkúrò* leaves: overlook my sins" (p.156). Through the quotation, it is clear that Kukoyi endeavours to beg his former wife for reconciliation. However, Peju rejects the flower and asks him a series of rhetorical question as it can be seen in the quotation below:

Peju shook her head. 'Keep your flower to yourself. [...]. You succeeded in deceiving me while we were courting or when we just married. But that has passed; you can no longer do so. For instance, which ones of your scandals and misdeeds should I overlook? The humiliation inflicted on me and my family? The dented image of the Aralamos and the accompanying shame? The marriage which you stubbornly wrecked? The education of my children which you almost derailed? Your own arrogance displayed to all and sundry, including your closest friends? The overall consequences of your recklessness and irresponsibility? No, I don't want your flower.' (p. 156)

The above quotation clearly shows that Peju is not ready to forgive her irresponsible husband. He has committed so many sins that she does not know which ones to forgive. The novelist uses this to show that those sins constitute Kukoyi's burden or his cross that he has to carry just as Jesus Christ carried the sins of the world on the Cross of Calvary. Rather than feeling defeated and abdicating, he goes on to beg her further as it is illustrated in the excerpt below:

- 'Listen, Peju; you must forgive and forget.'
- 'No, only an idiot can forget such a trauma. I don't think I can ever forget what you put me through. Are you thinking of soap story for instance?'
- 'I'm sorry about that. I just wanted an excuse.'
- 'You are a wicked soul,' Peju wept bitterly.
- 'I'm sorry,' Kukoyi said again in a tearful voice. (p.156)

The above-mentioned excerpt shows that Kukoyi sincerely regrets his action. His desperate search for reconciliation is a hint to all husbands who indulge in unfaithfulness and resort to divorce. Reconciliation is the key to the welfare of the family. That is why he desperately says: "I need some comfort, some love, some sense of belonging; I want to be my children's father" (p.157). Through this quotation, it is apparent that Kukoyi is determined to repair what he has spoilt because he has noticed that a man cannot do anything alone. He hopefully tells Peju who thinks that it is illegal for them to live together: "[...] no court will frown at our remarrying, if we decide to do so. I know I have erred and I am ready to make amends. We shall go back to the Registry" (p. 157) Peju's is ready to accept Kukoyi's apology. However, she wants the reconciliation to take place through the familial canal, just as it has happened with the divorce. The following quotation is an illustration:

'[...]. You are the proverbial child whose cutlass has fallen into a crab's hole: you cannot retrieve it by yourself. The ears that heard your story at the onset must also hear the end result. Until you repeat these antics of yours at another silly season before your family members and mine, don't expect any answer from me.' (p. 158)

The foregoing quotation reveals that Peju is ready to forgive Kukoyi and to forget her past grievances. However, she thinks that the sine qua nun to forgive him lies in his own hands. So, she pleads with him to gather his family members as well as hers so that they may hear the end result. As Peju rises to makes for the courtyard, the mediator, Yank, holds her

back and pleads with her: "Don't walk out on him. As you can see yourself, father realised his mistakes, he has come to beg you. You have to pardon him. It is not only because of us. All of us we can be happy again as a family if you allow him to stay with us" (p. 158).

Despite Yinka's insistence that she should forgive their father on the spot, the novel ends in a sad note insofar as there is no hint of their reconciliation. So, the novelist has chosen to end his novel in a cul-de-sac. Peju's apparent lack of cooperation in the solution of the problem seems to upset Yinka, the mediator. According to B. Zare (2011, p. 185), "The unfaithful spouse has initiated the divorce but the faithful spouse is more likely to develop depression. When a person discovers a partner's infidelity, he should decide about forgiving the partner and remain together or end the relationship." In the same vein, Mortan Hunt (1969, p. 157) declares: "I have not yet seen any evidence that the loving, satisfying, and close marriage can be improved or even that it can remain unthreatened by affairs." It means that forgiveness is the only solution to the problem.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper has dealt with three sections. The first section has examined the manifestations of unfaithfulness. The second section has dealt with the consequences of unfaithfulness, and the third one has unveiled the lack of cooperation in the attempt to solve the problem. A. S. Ogundimu has used many literary techniques, including proverbs, similes and parables to convey his message. He has mainly used the characters of Peju and Kukoyi – forming a couple in which the husband, Kukoyi, is unfaithful – to reach his goal. He has succeeded in impacting his readership by drawing his readers' attention to the dangers inherent in unfaithfulness insofar as it has a lot of setbacks. The study has revealed that unfaithfulness is a very bad practice couple and that husband and wife forget the promise of faithfulness that they make to each other after they get married. The findings of the study clearly show that unfaithfulness exposes families to dislocation and that women suffer more than men when it occurs. It is a phenomenon which is very harmful to society and needs to be eradicated. To avoid this phenomenon, faithfulness should prevail in every couple for the wellbeing of families and of society at large.

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